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SECURITY COUNCIL
Fifty-fourth year

Letter dated 15 April 1999 from the Permanent Representative of Ukraine to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to forward to you herewith the excerpts from the statement made by the President of Ukraine, Leonid Kuchma, at his meeting of 15 April 1999 with the representatives of the national mass media on the mediation initiative of Ukraine regarding the settlement of the Kosovo crisis (see annex).

I would be grateful if you could have the present letter and its annex circulated as a document of the General Assembly, under agenda item 10, and of the Security Council.

(Signed) Volodymyr YEL'CHENKO
Ambassador
Permanent Representative of
Ukraine to the United Nations

Annex

Excerpts from the statement made by the President of Ukraine, Leonid Kuchma, at his meeting of 15 April 1999 with the representatives of the national mass media on the mediation initiative of Ukraine regarding the settlement of the Kosovo crisis

Question:

The mediation initiative of the President of Ukraine on the settlement of the Yugoslav conflict was made public literally in its first hours, on March 24. Two days later, on your instructions the delegation of Ukraine headed by the Minister for Foreign Affairs left for Belgrade. At that time, nobody else has talked about mediation yet.

Have we received a response? What is the reaction of the conflicting parties?

Answer:

We keep in constant touch with the parties to the conflict, neighboring states, influential members of the international community. These efforts are being pursued both at the level of the heads of states, inter alia, over the phone, during my visits to Slovenia and Moscow to the CIS Summit, and by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. During the negotiations with the President of the FRY S.Milosevic, the head of the Yugoslav diplomacy Z.Jovanovic Minister B.Tarasyuk presented in detail the Ukrainian initiative and proposed the mediation offices to cease military actions. Immediately after that visit, member states of the Contact Group, including Russia, were familiarized with the proposals of Ukraine. We were the first. Not everybody accepted Ukraine at once as a mediator. Today, the situation has changed. The last example is the negotiations between Ukraine and the European Union Troika on April 13, in Kyiv, which was represented by the Foreign Ministers of Germany, Austria and Finland. Our guests not only noted a special value of the Ukrainian efforts, but called for their intensification.

Question:

Would you describe the main aspects of the mediation initiative of Ukraine. What are their specifics?

Answer:

We believe that no international dispute may be allowed to grow into a conflict, it should be settled not by means of force but through negotiations. We are also convinced that no government has the right to exercise terror and violence against its own citizens, to restrict their human and civil rights. At last, the use of force is inadmissible without a relevant decision of the UN Security Council. That is the crux of Ukraine`s position which was made public in the Statement of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of March 24.

Proceeding from this position, we elaborated our mediation initiative, which, as I mentioned above, was presented to the leadership of the FRY and Member States of the Contact Group back on March 27 and 30.

Its primary objective is to stop sliding down to the abyss, to break down the logic of war. The way to that is in simultaneous, I repeat, **simultaneous and synchronized steps** toward each other.

The plan consists of three phases. **At the first phase,** which envisages such synchronous steps, the authorities of Yugoslavia shall stop military actions in Kosovo, withdraw their armed and security forces from the province, create conditions for unhindered return of hundreds of thousands of refugees under the international supervision of peace-keeping force. NATO member states shall stop air strikes against the FRY.

The peacekeeping contingent could be formed under the auspices of the United Nations, possibly - the OSCE, and Ukraine would be ready to take part in it. In a likewise manner, all military actions shall be synchronously ceased by the Kosovo Albanians. It is to ensure control over synchronism and inviolability of the reached agreements that the peace-keeping force should be deployed simultaneously with the withdrawal of the Yugoslav forces.

A critically important detail is that the peace-keepers should be led by a political figure, vested with the UN Security Council mandate - I would name this person a Special Envoy or Representative of the UN Secretary-General. The peace-keeping force could be staffed according to the principle of acceptability to all the parties concerned, which means, first of all, from the non-block and neutral states.

The second phase includes return of the refugees under the supervision of and accompanied by the peacekeeping forces, deployment of the OSCE humanitarian mission to ensure well-ordered return and housing of the refugees and displaced persons.

The third phase could constitute the convening of a peace conference in the capital of one of the neutral states.

During all the time until the final settlement of the problem of refugees the international community, first of all the European states, the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees and the International Committee of the Red Cross should provide the refugees, citizens of the FRY, and the neighboring with the FRY states, where the majority of refugees are accumulated, with the necessary humanitarian aid.

Question:

The initiatives of the President of Ukraine seem to be largely echoed with the proposals by the UN Secretary-General K.Annan in his statement in Geneva of April 9, in the EU statement on Kosovo, in the position of the Non-Aligned Movement...

Answer:

We have never tried to make of our initiative a point for competition. The main objective is to bring peace to the Balkans. Ukraine does not claim to have a monopoly on mediation. The fact that our ideas are being shared by others testifies to their realistic nature from the very beginning. By the way, the sooner the parties to the conflict realize it, the better it will be.

As for their specific value - it is in the role of Ukraine. It just turned out that the status of Ukraine, which is not a party to any bloc, is acceptable to all the parties as an impartial interlocutor. For 8 years of the regained independence, we have proved to possess a skill to solve the most difficult problems in a peaceful manner. Back at home, we managed to settle in the same way an extremely precarious [ethnic, historic and humanitarian] problem in the Crimea. Abroad, we participated and shall participate in peace-keeping operations, including operations in the Balkans. We actively contribute to the resolution of the situation around Abkhasia. Ukraine is a guarantor of the conflict settlement in Transdnistria.

[Therefore] We have a moral right to state that our mediation efforts are sincere, proposals are realistic, and we have people to implement them.

Question:

Imagine that we receive positive answers from Belgrade and Brussels now. Is Kyiv ready for this?

Answer:

Certainly. I shall talk to both President S.Milosevic and Secretary-General J.Solana. Foreign Minister Borys Tarasyuk will be ready to fly to Washington, D.C., and Yugoslavia. We are ready to talk to Dr. I.Rugova, who can come to Kyiv.

But first – to end military actions simultaneously. The Action Plan is at the disposal of the conflicting parties. Kyiv is expecting an answer.